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FRIDAY, JULY 28TH, 2017

Interview with Ruby Montoya and Jessica Renzicek

by Onion / *Earth First! Newswire*

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(<http://earthfirstjournal.org/newswire/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/07/636364932817831938-170724-01-iubprotest-bp.jpg>).

On July 24, Ruby Montoya and Jessica Reznicek held a press conference in which they read a prepared statement while standing in front of the Iowa Utility Board (IUB). In the statement, Ruby and Jessica confessed to arson and other acts of sabotage along the Dakota Access pipeline, describing what they did in detail and stating their reasons (expanded upon below). They then took a crowbar and hammer and began pulling off the letters of the IUB sign before being arrested. They were released from jail the next day and charged with fourth degree criminal mischief. The day after that, the three of us had a phone call.

Onion: What was the thought process and the goals of choosing to write a statement admitting guilt instead of releasing an anonymous communiqué about your actions?

Ruby: Jess and I have been doing this and we formed a solid team of two and we discussed claiming responsibility for these actions after being called by the *Intercept* about illegal surveillance and DAPL security that was done and it began to feel like we as a collective started to focus on all the shitty things the state and all the corporations they protect do instead of focusing on stopping the pipeline.. We saw it as an opportunity to come forward and refocus the issue that we need to stop this pipeline and it doesn't matter how dirty the other side plays. We seem to get caught up and fragmented in that stuff and lose sight of our goal, which is still stopping this pipeline. And, making something anonymous in these

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particular circumstances. Used distance and eliminates small fragments further instead of trying to humanize these things as viable and peaceful options for the resistance.

O: Quite a few movements and groups throughout history have used the tactic of taking responsibility for their acts of resistance, even if that means prison time. Were you inspired by any of these movements or groups?

Jessica: I would say that I absolutely have been; I've been a part of the Des Moines Catholic Worker movement here for six years and have participated in civil disobedience and my own kind of variation of Plowshares (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plowshares_movement) in Omaha, two years ago, at US Defense contractor Northrop Grumman. I stood there and accepted responsibility for my action at that time, also out of necessity. And coming from this position where I really want to, at this point especially, with the pipeline, share publicly the situation that we're in, and to do so I must claim responsibility for what I've done; especially when I know in my heart that it was the right thing to do and that I'm following my spirit every step of the way. And we've had—already, in the recent few days—just an influx of media organizations calling us. Taking responsibility really humanized this action, especially for folks who have known me and worked with me here in Iowa in various activist organizations in the past six years to realize that their friend, their colleague, their comrade is really somebody who would take actions like this. I think that definitely I'm inspired by the movement; I'm inspired by the Berrigans and by my partner Frank Cordero and by all of the struggles we have. By no means do I look forward to the incarceration that unfortunately is the consequence that I'm willing to take on. I just have an overwhelming need to get this word out.

O: By now, thousands (if not more) of folks have seen the video of y'all getting arrested. Is there anything that happened while in custody that you'd like to discuss?

R: While we were incarcerated we were taken into separate interrogation rooms where the FBI from Omaha tried to question us and we both declined speaking with them because we have no interest in speaking with the feds.

J: We had in our statement (<http://earthfirstjournal.org/newswire/2017/07/24/two-women-claim-responsibility-for-dapl-fires-and-valve-destruction/>) that we also encourage friends, family, and the community—and a broader community, the activist community in general—to never comply with the state. The best thing we can do in these situations to protect ourselves and our comrades is stay silent.

O: Fuck yeah! Do you think there's a reason that you're not in jail right now?

R: Yeah, I think it is because we came out of left field, from another dimension or something and they don't know how to handle this stuff. The Feds seem to have this idea of how things work in their world, with this patriarchal, hierarchical system where someone gives someone else orders and then someone else ends up doing things and that's just not the way that this (us) works. This is how we do resistance: with trust, solidarity, and integrity. I feel personally that you can have people that you admire and who inspire you, but you ultimately need to be your own leader and have self-responsibility and act upon that, and that's what we did and we definitely threw them for a loop and they're probably having meetings right now, deciding how to handle this politically.



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O: I would love to be a fly on the wall at these meetings. How has the movement responded thus far to your decision to go public? How do you think it affects the future?

R: I feel that the response has been overwhelmingly positive and also I feel that many people were very surprised, but very proud about what we've done. I hope in the future that more peaceful direct action is taken in this manner for those that feel the call to act with integrity, and I hope that no one else has to come forward to do these things.

O: What I gathered from y'all's statement and what I heard reported, you all plan on defending yourselves in court. Is this true? And, what do you think that's going to look like?

J: Yeah, Ruby and I are acting *pro se*. We have a fantastic federal attorney, Mr. Bill Quigley of Loyola Law School serving as our stand-by council and we hope to garner further legal support as stand by. I represented myself in the last trial I had, two years ago in Omaha, working with Bill Quigley as my stand-by council and also Robert Sigler as a local stand-by council out of Sarpy County, Omaha. I feel that it's a process that really is empowering for us as defendants, and as great as Robert Sigler and Bill Quigley are as individuals—I admire them greatly—they really can't express adequately our reasons and our focus on these issues regarding the DAPL project because they aren't us and we were acting from our hearts and our spirits the entire time and ultimately that's how we're going to have to represent ourselves to a jury of our peers. I don't have faith in this court system or legal system, but I do still maintain faith in the people. And I'm an Iowan, born and raised here, and I really have faith in Iowans, and Iowa in general. The people of Iowa said no repeatedly to this pipeline. I really, really hope that we get a jury that adequately represents the desires of the local people.

O: I hope so too! Do y'all have needs that still need to be met?

R: We talked to our lawyer and he talked about the importance of social media and having a website with updates and that seems to be lacking a bit. And, also, trying to find lawyers to help that are more adept in this field. I don't know if there are any in Iowa or if we could find some in Iowa that would take this case, but that would be very helpful.

O: Is there anything else you'd like people to know?

R: We did this out of necessity and a true calling from our hearts and we are in a dire situation with this climate spinning into chaos because of these corporations and the federal government that allows them to lead us further into the unknown as far as climate change is concerned. Anyone that's aware of this needs to be doing—I feel—everything that they can to prevent this downturn that we're in as far as polluting our home.

If you have any resources that would be helpful to Ruby and Jessica in their upcoming battle, please contact their lawyer, Bill Quigley (504-710-3074) or their media liaison Alex Cohen (314-971-6304)



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